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Utah Guard and State Government Take Morocco Partnership to New Level

SALT LAKE CITY — Members of the Utah National Guard and civilians with the Department of Public Safety are finalizing training plans for an upcoming trip to Kenitra, Morocco. For two weeks in March 2014, the exercise, known as Gharb-Utah Joint Rapid Response, will showcase the interoperability that Utah has developed within its emergency-management community by sharing this expertise with its Moroccan military counterparts.

“The objectives of this event are to strengthen our bilateral partnership, familiarize each other with our policies and procedures when responding to disasters and exercise emergency operations center response functions,” explained Lt. Col. Chris Caldwell, lead planner for the Utah National Guard.

The Utah National Guard, partnering with civilian agencies in state government, has built a strong relationship with Morocco over the past ten years, and although Utah Guard-members train with the Moroccan military every year, this exercise is significant because it is the “first-ever interagency exchange focusing on disaster response,” explained Caldwell.

Utah is taking military personnel to Morocco with expertise in disaster management along with civilians representing Unified Fire, Salt Lake County Emergency Management, Utah Division of Emergency Management and Utah Department of Health.

Under the auspices of the U.S. military’s State Partnership Program, Utah has worked diligently to foster a good relationship with Morocco. Recognizing this relationship, the U.S. Army’s Africa Command made this year’s event possible by providing special funding through their Disaster Planning and Preparedness Program.

Media Notes: *Travel and exercise dates, and exact number of personnel are sensitive information. For SPP background go to <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R41957.pdf>. For additional information contact Maj. Bruce Roberts, exercise public affairs officer at richard.b.roberts16.mil@mail.mil or 801-716-9293.*